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Language Teaching in India: Issues and Innovations

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BOOK NOTICES

COMMUNICATION IN THE LANGUAGE CLASSROOM. *Tony Lynch.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996. Pp. xvi + 174. \$13.95 paper.

This book, an addition to the *Oxford Handbooks for Language Teachers* series, clearly falls on the applied end of the research-applied spectrum. Still, the author takes a gentle but insistent stance that research into communication provides practical insights to the classroom teacher.

Part 1 is a broad but selective review of research on language use inside and outside of classrooms. The four chapters explore how simplification, negotiation, and comprehension are related and how “*successful simplification . . . contributes to both the current communicative event and to longer term language development*” (p. 15). Using principles of pragmatics and examples from classroom discourse, the author shows how comprehension is frequently an individual matter and yet one that can lead to the noticing and acquisition of language.

Part 2 focuses on classroom application in chapters on teaching listening, speaking, reading, and writing and a “postscript” chapter addressing four reasons for not changing to a more interactional teaching. It is key to the author’s purpose that the kind of interaction he is promoting be realized in the context of more traditionally oriented skill-based teaching—throughout the language curriculum—rather than isolated in some sort of communicative island. In each chapter, the author skillfully shows how “interactive negotiation”—negotiation between learners and texts and among learners—can be made part of a typical lesson. Each chapter includes exemplary activities (e.g., paused listening, reciprocal teaching of reading) and numerous suggestions on making lessons more interactive and yet directed toward traditional skill and accuracy objectives.

The book is well laid out and illustrated. It includes selected but useful suggestions for further reading and data-based activities for further exploration.

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ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING IN INDIA: ISSUES AND INNOVATIONS. *R. K. Agnihotri and A. L. Khanna (Eds.).* New Delhi, India: Sage, 1995. Pp. 338. \$42.00 cloth.

This collected volume on English language teaching (ELT) in India contains 22 articles written by Indian teachers and researchers. The book has been divided into six sections. The first section—“Problematizing ELT in India”—offers a critical, historical perspective along with inno-

vative ideas for making English language learning and teaching meaningful and purposive in modern India. The second section—"Nature of ELT Materials"—demonstrates how the ELT materials used in Indian classrooms are not embedded in local needs and indigenous contexts. The section emphasizes the importance of developing instructional materials that not only make use of the rich linguistic and cultural resources available in India but also promote effective communication skills among the learners. The third section—"Learner Profiles"—provides interesting insights into the needs, wants, and lacks of Indian learners of English. This section shows how the instruments of needs analysis developed in monocultural and monolingual settings are inadequate for assessing the needs and wants of learners in multilingual and multicultural India. The fourth section—"Classroom Issues"—focuses on certain central issues affecting teaching and learning in the classroom context, particularly the role of native language knowledge and skills that Indian learners bring with them. The fifth section—"Course Evaluation and Teacher Development"—suggests ideas for making teacher education responsive to the changing roles and responsibilities of language teachers. The sixth and final section—"Curriculum Change"—deals with the principles and procedures for curricular changes that are in tune with the evolving knowledge about learning and teaching and the increasing desire for learner control of the process of materials development and evaluation.

This book is designed as a companion volume to *Second Language Acquisition: Sociocultural and Linguistic Aspects of English in India* and put together by the same editors. Together, the two volumes provide invaluable insights into the challenges and opportunities facing the ELT profession in India and, by extension, the EFL profession at large.

REFERENCE

- Agnihotri, R. K., & Khanna, A. L. (Eds.). (1994). *Second language acquisition: Sociocultural and linguistic aspects of English in India*. New Delhi, India: Sage.

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COMPUTATIONAL PSYCHOLINGUISTICS: AI AND CONNECTIONIST MODELS OF HUMAN LANGUAGE PROCESSING. *Ton Dijkstra & Koenraad de Smedt (Eds.)*. Bristol, PA: Taylor & Francis, 1996. Pp. xv + 437. \$79.95 cloth, \$29.95 paper.

Computational Psycholinguistics is an integrated collection by researchers within psycholinguistics aimed at providing a balanced treatment of current computational modeling in both language perception and generation. The initial chapters of the book provide an introduction to the general techniques used in computational modeling (Dijkstra & de Smedt), as well as perspectives from traditional symbolic artificial intelligence (Daelemans & de Smedt) and connectionist approaches (Murre & Goebel). The themes presented in the introductory chapters are well integrated into the rest of the book, consistent with the goal of providing a relatively self-contained introduction, suitable for a graduate-level psycholinguistics classroom or a general introductory source.

The remaining chapters are divided among two sections dealing with comprehension and

production. The comprehension section begins with units of perceptual processing in speech perception (Massaro) and continues with sublexical and lexical processing in auditory (Frauenfelder), visual word recognition (Grainger & Dijkstra), and processing issues raised by morphologically complex words (Baayen & Schreuder). In the section on parsing, Kempen emphasizes cognitive issues in parallel, incremental, and interactive processing. Garnham completes the section by laying out the challenges involved with modeling text integration. The chapters dealing with production concern models of constructive processes in text planning (Andriessen, de Smedt, & Zock), sentence formulation (de Smedt), lemma retrieval (Roelofs), lexeme processing (Dell & Juliano), low-level speech formation (Boves & Cranen), and current models of handwriting (Schomaker & Van Galen).

Although no attention is provided explicitly to SLA in this book, researchers who have an interest in current modeling attempts in psycholinguistics should find this volume an illustrative and welcome addition.

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FOREIGN LANGUAGE POLICY: AN AGENDA FOR CHANGE. *Richard D. Lambert (Ed.). The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 532 (March 1994). Special Issue. Pp. 249. \$14.00 paper.

This collection of 15 papers includes two that also appear in Lambert (1994). Lambert has included significant perspectives on language teaching in America, with papers reflecting elementary and secondary education as well as adult needs and language-maintenance efforts. Presenting an excellent, inclusive set of concerns, this issue of *Annals* deserves special attention.

Bergentoft's chapter offers a comparative approach to language-education policy. Observations on immigrant and minority languages set the stage for subsequent chapters. Comparing responses for 15 countries is an enormous task, and a few errors do appear—for example, discussing Germany's education system as if it were centrally controlled and references to language requirements that fail to distinguish among curricula. Minor matters aside, the highly instructive comparison sets the tone for the volume. Van Els demonstrates the appropriateness for a national language-education policy of the agenda in this volume.

Recurring themes include diversity of actors in determining U.S. language-education policy (which I would say exists by default, not design), advocacy of policy, a language-maintenance policy for ethnic groups, and shortcomings in reliance on external funding.

With few exceptions, the contributors avoid contradicting one another—for example, Bergentoft notes no language requirement in Japan, whereas others speak of one. The reader benefits from Adelman's upbeat interpretation and Starr's cautionary approach to statistics. Those contributors who consider ethnic speakers assume that they are proficient. Because my experience differs, I would take issue and use incomplete mastery as an additional reason to stress language preservation.

REFERENCE

Lambert, R. D. (Ed.). (1994). *Language planning around the world: Contexts and systemic change*. Washington, DC: National Foreign Language Center.

(Received 4 August 1995)

Kurt E. Müller

UNDERSTANDING LANGUAGE CHANGE. *April M. S. McMahon*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994. Pp. xi + 361. \$17.95 cloth, \$14.36 paper.

This book, based on an undergraduate course at Cambridge University, provides a comprehensive introduction to language change. Chapter 1 sets forth the history of the study of language change and the basic questions in the field. The remainder of the book is divided into two parts. Chapters 2–7 examine internally motivated change at the phonological, syntactic, semantic, and lexical levels. Within each chapter, the author outlines important theoretical positions, from the Neogrammarians to the generative work of Lightfoot and more recent studies of grammaticalization. Although, as McMahon notes, the separation of types of language change by levels involves considerable idealization, the result is greater clarity of organization. The second part (Chapters 8–12), which is concerned with language contact, language variation, pidgins and creoles, language attrition and death, and linguistic evolution, is organized topically. It is this section that is perhaps of most interest to students of SLA. As in the first section, McMahon reviews the perspectives on language change that emerge from a wide variety of classic studies, including Bickerton's work on Guyanese Creole and Dorian's studies of East Sutherland Gaelic. Although specialists might be disappointed to see their favorite studies missing, the examples provide an effective introduction for the intended audience of undergraduates.

In the preface, McMahon states that her intention was to write a book for students without prior exposure to historical linguistics. She has succeeded in offering a clear treatment of important topics such as the problems of actuation, implementation, and transmission, a wealth of accessible linguistic examples, and an evenhanded exposition of the major contributions to the field.

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ETHNOMETHODOLOGY. *Alain Coulon*. Translated from French by Jacqueline Coulon and Jack Katz. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1995. Pp. 82. \$9.50 paper, \$21.50 cloth.

Ethnomethodology is a qualitative research methodology developed as an alternative possibility for social scientists investigating the different ways in which reality is socially constructed.

For theorists and researchers of language acquisition and language use in educational settings, ethnomethodology makes it possible to examine social discourse and participation structures in and out of school that are tied to success or failure in language learning. As Gumperz explains, with the help of ethnomethodology we study how knowledge is acquired, what role differences in home and ethnic background play in the acquisition process, and how the acquisition process interacts with evaluational progress and the child's motivation to learn.

It is important to note that it is not possible to understand the tenets of ethnomethodology without studying its philosophical foundations. In fact, *Ethnomethodology* does a fine job of contextualizing the methodology in the existential-phenomenological system of social inquiry. Within this theoretical context, our situation as researchers of language learning emerges as a rather complex one. On the one hand, we are urged to reject the fiction that we can detach ourselves and become merely objective observers of educational situations. On the other hand, we are cautioned to mistrust the participants' subjective interpretations of their own situations and attempts to go beyond there to reach a critical understanding. To summarize, Coulon's sophisticated analysis of ethnomethodology invites us to see research as a reflexive tool for inquiring about social practices in which language learning is contextualized, including the practice of doing research itself.

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